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UNCLAS HARARE 000008

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/PDPA FOR DALTON, MITCHELL, SIMS AND FOR AF/S
NSC FOR JENDAYI FRAZER
LONDON FOR GURNEY
PARIS FOR NEARY
NAIROBI FOR PFLAUMER

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KPAO](#) [ZI](#)

SUBJECT: MEDIA REPORT: WHY NYAROTA WAS FIRED; HARARE

- ¶1. On December 31, 2002 Associated Newspapers of Zimbabwe (ANZ), publishers of the "Daily News," fired Geoffrey Nyarota, the paper's much-lauded founding Editor-in-Chief. Local and international media outlets have since been speculating about what caused this sudden editorial shake-up at Zimbabwe's only independent daily newspaper.
- ¶2. In an article published in the January 2 edition of the British-based "Guardian" newspaper, Nyarota alleges that he was dismissed as a "trade off for the registration of the ANZ titles" under the controversial Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA). Nyarota implies that the ANZ board were pressured by the Ministry of Information and its Media Commission (responsible for licensing both media houses and individual journalists) to fire Nyarota in order to obtain the licensing necessary to continue publishing in 2003. This version of events also appears in the January 3 edition of the weekly Zimbabwe Independent.
- ¶3. However, on the front page of the January 3 edition of the "Daily News," ANZ management explains that Nyarota was dismissed for allegedly supporting a ten-day industrial action that crippled the newspaper and prevented its publication for nine days. According to the Executive Chairman of ANZ, Samuel Sipepa Nkomo, Nyarota was "booted out because he forked out Z\$9,4 million from his own pocket to pay ANZ workers who were on strike." Nkomo has also dismissed Nyarota's attempt to blame the government of Zimbabwe for his dismissal saying: "We are greatly saddened by this attempt to twist what is clearly a labor matter between Geoffrey Nyarota and ANZ into a political issue."
- ¶4. "ANZ has not applied to register under AIPPA, because ANZ's lawyers are making final touches to a court application to challenge the constitutionality of the registration provisions. No trade-off is possible for us on the legitimacy of AIPPA," Nkomo is quoted as saying at a press conference in Harare yesterday (January 2). The January 3 edition of the government-controlled daily "The Herald" also carried a similar story on page one under headline "Nyarota blames government for dismissal."
- ¶5. Comment: Nyarota's dismissal from the "Daily News" has dominated the Zimbabwean media this week. Post will continue to monitor the story and to speak to the actors involved in order to clarify the true cause of this editorial shake-up. Like many readers, we will be scrutinizing the copy of the "Daily" in coming weeks to determine whether its new editorial team will abandon Nyarota's fiercely independent and critical stance.

WHITEHEAD